



## F. Education and Sustainable Human Development

Considering education from a sustainable human development perspective raises a number of fundamental questions:

- What is the contribution of the school (in the area of general education) to enabling students to participate in the development process and partake in its benefits? This question relates to the acquisition of knowledge and training.
- What is the percentage of the population who acquire this knowledge and training? This question has to do with access to education.
- How should education be organized to promote interaction among students, and to provide common ground and mechanisms that promote social cohesion? This question relates to the role of education in strengthening social cohesion.
- What measures are being applied by the authorities, or that should be taken, to widen participation in shaping and building the future? This question concerns the education policy being applied.

The contribution of education to sustainable human development is assessed on the basis of the ability of the system to empower individuals and groups, and the role it plays in activating the dynamics of the social fabric in a way that reinforces national ties and enhances the opportunities for sustainable human development at all levels. The ability of the education system to achieve these goals is examined below by considering twelve relevant indicators. This is followed by an assessment of the policies adopted to develop and improve the system.

### 1. Indicators

*a. Universal basic education : age group 6 - 14 years, and eradication of illiteracy.* Elementary education is not universal. The enrollment ratio for the age group 6-9 years was about 84 percent in 1996; and 93 percent for the age group 10 - 14 years. This discrepancy could be due to delay in enrolling children in elementary education at the appropriate age; and/or the decline in the number of children enrolled due to economic difficulties or non-availability of schools in the vicinity.

Table III-17: School enrollment ratios by age group and gender (percent)

| Age group (years) | Male | Female |
|-------------------|------|--------|
| 6-9               | 83.7 | 83.9   |
| 10-14             | 92.6 | 93.4   |
| 15-19             | 59.3 | 65.7   |
| 20-24             | 24.7 | 24.9   |
| 25-29             | 6.0  | 4.6    |

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs - United Nations Population Fund, Population and Housing Database Survey, 1996.

The overall illiteracy rate in Lebanon was 13.3 percent in 1996, with a large disparity between males (9.2 percent) and females (17.8 percent). This disparity is particularly marked in the upper age groups (45 years and above), with the

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illiteracy rate attaining 22.1 percent for males and 46 percent for females. This situation indicates that illiteracy is an inherited problem, but which is currently on the decline; differences between males and females are also narrowing.

Table III-18: Illiteracy rate by gender and age group  
(percent)

| Age group (years) | Male | Female |
|-------------------|------|--------|
| 10-14             | 2.0  | 2.2    |
| 15-19             | 3.6  | 3.6    |
| 20-24             | 4.1  | 4.8    |
| 25-29             | 4.6  | 7.0    |
| 30-34             | 5.5  | 8.5    |
| 35-39             | 5.8  | 11.5   |
| 40-44             | 6.9  | 16.8   |
| 45 and above      | 22.1 | 46.0   |

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs - United Nations  
Population Fund, Population and Housing Database Survey,  
1996.

*b. Improving access to the secondary level for the age group 15-19 years - i.e. reducing rates of failure, retardation and drop-out.* Failure and retardation rates remain high - estimated between one-fourth and one-third of students enrolled in elementary, intermediate and secondary education. This explains the low rate (63 percent) of enrollment in secondary education.

The economic situation and the educational background of parents play a decisive role in children's education. The lower the position of parents on these two scales, the higher the failure and drop-out rates. The provision of equal opportunities of education, especially to low-income groups, requires that the underlying causes be identified and dealt with. In this respect, the performance of the national education system has been inadequate.

*c. Ensuring equal opportunities between females and males in the education sector as a whole.* Available statistics show that approximately half of all students are female (49.9 percent in 1995); the ratio being even higher at the secondary level (53.4 percent). It is also possible that the number of female students will exceed that of males at the university level, especially if they continue to excel in official examinations at the secondary level. In the academic year 1994/1995, the success rate in these examinations was 57.7 percent for female students, compared to 51.3 percent for males; the number of female students who sat for the examination also exceeding the number of males (12,839 females against 11,021 males). Females consistently outperformed males in the different disciplines: mathematics, females 59.9 percent against overall 54.4 percent; sciences, females 61.9 percent against overall 58.2 percent; and, philosophy, females 55.3 percent against overall 51.9 percent.

From this perspective, the situation in Lebanon can be considered satisfactory, though differences still exist between the two groups with respect to illiteracy rates, especially among older people.

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### *d. Ensuring equal opportunities in basic education for all regions and social groups*

The war accentuated poverty in the remote regions and led to the deterioration of education services. It is also believed that elementary enrollment ratios are low in these regions.

Disparities between social groups begin to emerge at the elementary level, with the rise in rates of failure, retardation and drop-outs among children of poor families. These usually attend public or subsidized schools. As a result, the chances that students attending private elementary schools reach university level are estimated between three and five to one compared to students of public elementary education. From this perspective, providing equal education opportunities for children in all regions is an urgent need.

### *e. Providing the type of education that instills in students the basic knowledge needed to make them active and productive members of society.* Except for a limited number of private schools and universities, the type of knowledge that students acquire is not compatible with the times, nor is adequately acquired by students.

The scattered studies that have been carried out indicate that the curricula stress fields of general knowledge (sciences and mathematics) and languages (Arabic and foreign). They also indicate that this knowledge is transmitted in an encyclopedic fashion (93 percent of instruction time is knowledge-oriented). Moreover, the knowledge passed on is not up-to-date, suffers from inaccuracies and ambiguity in the material offered at both the information and conceptual levels. The studies have also revealed low academic achievement in general, 67 to 75 percent of students in elementary education obtaining below average grades in basic subjects. A sample survey and study of fifth elementary grade in 1996 revealed that the mean learning achievement was 38.6 (out of a maximum of 100); there were slight variations among public schools (30.4), free-of-charge schools (33.4), and private schools (42.7).

Important factors determining education achievement are up-to-date, adapted school curricula, on the one hand, and dedicated, qualified teachers and school principals, on the other. With respect to the latter, there is a need for rehabilitation and upgrading. The present student-teacher ratios are deceiving (11.6 for all schools); they hide a fundamental problem affecting the education system - a surplus of thousands of teachers in the public school system. In public schools, the student-teacher ratio was 8 in 1995.

### *f. Equipping students with knowledge skills, or methods of thinking, and communication skills that enable them to acquire, analyze, and deal with emerging knowledge, and contribute to the development of society and themselves* An analysis of school curricula and textbooks, and of examinations, shows that the education system puts stress on the lower levels of knowledge, especially cognition, comprehension and application skills of a textbook nature (home works in mathematics and grammar) at the expense of higher levels of knowledge such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation, which ought to be given more attention. Some studies indicate that two-thirds of teaching time is taken up by instructors; reaching 80 percent at the secondary level. This is true of all subjects, attaining a maximum in the social sciences.

The educational philosophy should promote mental and applied practical participation by students, and instill in them the spirit of inquisition and analysis.

### *g. Providing a social up-bringing that equips students with life and social skills, and*

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*with values and attitudes that serve to promote development and advance society.* In general, the current curricula show little interest in life skills such as health, environment and nutrition; or in social skills, citizenship and awareness of rights and obligations such as communication skills, cooperation, expression of opinion and independent thinking and dealing with conflict. Thus, school books still depict women as housewives who cook and raise children, whereas men do the work and read. In turn, social relations are governed by an idealistic authority (the loving and able father, the devoted mother, the ideal teacher and the righteous clergy man), and do not take the form of reciprocal or participatory and cooperative relations.

In this context, the curricula and related aspects (books, teaching and evaluation methods) do not make an effective contribution towards promoting sustainable human development.

*h. Preparing students for work, through vocational orientation in general education and training at the secondary and university levels, and through informal forms of training that enhance skills and help students to keep abreast of developments* Vocational orientation is virtually absent in general education. Technical education and vocational training were available for 8.8 percent (25,400, of which more than 70 percent in private schools) of all students enrolled at the intermediate-secondary level in 1995, compared to the norm of about 25 percent. At higher levels, the so-called technical specializations (Technical Institute Diploma (T.S.) and Technical License (T.L.) absorb a relatively small fraction of students (around 5,000). As indicated above (section C), vocational training is dispersed and largely dependent on non-governmental organizations.

The problem, however, is not confined to the quantitative aspect, but goes beyond that to encompass several issues on the qualitative side, of which the following are worth noting: the problem of the curricula which were formulated in the 1960s, and which have retained their theoretical orientation; excessive specialization in certain fields without due attention to the absorptive capacity of the market - specialization in traditional service occupations (tourism, secretarial services, kindergarten, health services, etc.) still makes up some 70 percent of the total, and the rest is spread over specializations in the fields of electricity, electronics, mechanics and others; and, inadequate provisions at the material and teaching levels.

*i. Expanding the absorptive capacity of the public education system to improve opportunities for social interaction between students from different backgrounds so as to enhance social integration and the formation of a common national cultural base.* Public education currently accounts for about 30 percent of all students enrolled in general education, compared to 45 percent in 1972 /1973. The lowest percentage is to be found in pre-elementary education (14.7 percent), followed by elementary education (29.3 percent); but, 40 percent of the school population in intermediate and secondary levels, and 49 percent at the higher education level were enrolled in the public sector in 1995. The fact that the decline in the share of public education has coincided with the war period, and that private schools often have sectarian affiliations, have tended to weaken social integration and accentuate inequality of access to education.

Available studies indicate a strong divergence in the content of education among religious schools. This divergence has tended to widen with the production of more books that respond to specific group needs. Thus, there is no common hero image, or a shared vision of the national identity in its historic and geographic dimensions. There is also the strikingly low standard of the Arabic language - the national language - for students in basic education in the different schools.

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*j. Expanding higher education opportunities so as to raise the percentage of university students in the total population to 3 percent, or the enrollment ratio to 50 percent for the age group 20-24 years.* There are 21 institutions of higher education: one public (the Lebanese University), 19 private institutions, and one semi-public institution (Higher Technical Institute, Saida).

The university student/population ratio is 2,377 students for every 100,000 inhabitants (about 75,000 students in 1994). Although higher than the average for Arab countries (1,100), the ratio in Lebanon is still far below that in countries like France (3,000) or the United States (6,000). The fact that around one-fourth of university students in the country are foreigners reduces the significance of the ratio. Excluding non-Lebanese students, the ratio drops to less than 2,000 students for every 100,000 inhabitants. The university enrollment ratio for the age group 20-24 years in 1996 is estimated at 24.8 percent only.

On the other hand, in 1995 some 75 percent of students studied humanities: literature and arts (27.9 percent), and law, economics and social sciences (46.9 percent); while the scientific and engineering branches absorbed 22 percent of university students. Moreover, the standard and quality of higher education are not much better than in general education, as they also have lagged behind in adapting to change and modern developments.

*k. Existence of a cohesive education system* The national education system lacks cohesiveness. This is evident in the multiplicity of curricula and the fact that many of them are borrowed from or inspired by other countries, culminating in secondary school diplomas, such as the High School Certificate or the French Baccalaureate; existence of disparate academic orientation defined by foreign standards, the foreign language of instruction and books used, which renders transfers and educational mobility difficult; and the branching out of the Lebanese university beginning in 1977 to include 47 branches with all the attendant difficulties in teaching and academic conditions. The situation has been further complicated by the spread of new institutions of higher education with distinct sectarian or factional affiliations.

*l. Interaction between the school and its surroundings* Interaction between the school and the local surroundings (municipalities, clubs, associations, etc.) and parents facilitates the education process. This interaction between the school, whether public or private, and its surroundings is absent or very weak - a fact that tends to isolate the school from the course of local development and weakens the opportunities for mutual gain.

## 2. Education policies

There are plans and statements which indicate that the government intends to deal with the problems in the system of education, and to develop its potential to enable it to make a better contribution to sustainable human development and cope with the challenges of the times. In this connection, the Taef Accord considered under its first section (under the heading of general principles and reforms) education as one of five issues that needed reform. Ministerial statements by successive governments since the end of the war have also stressed the priority of education, equal opportunities in education, reform of curricula, and rehabilitation of the teaching cadre.

Translating these intentions into tangible measures is to be done through plans and projects to revive education. In this context, the budget of the Ministry of Education,

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Youth and Sports represented 5.7 percent of total allocations in the 1995 general budget. By adding the budgets of the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (1.7 percent), and that of the Ministry of Higher Education (1.78 percent), the total share of the education sector in the budget of 1995 becomes 8.3 percent. This is far below the share recorded in 1992 (12.5 percent), 1990 (11 percent) and 1986 (16.9 percent); and compares unfavorably with the situation on the eve of the war (1974-1975) when the share of education in the budget was between 16 and 22 percent, after which it began to decline.

These figures highlight the gap existing between intentions (Taef Accord and Ministerial declarations) and actual expenditures. Moreover, at the same time that the share of education in the general budget has been falling - to about one-half of what it was during the 1980s, and one-fourth of its level in the 1970s - its scope has narrowed to cover essentially the operations costs of public education (salaries and wages, 91.7 percent in 1995) and support of subsidized education. And, the findings of a report by the education inspectorship reveal there are 5,000 surplus instructors out of a total of 25,000. This situation implies waste equivalent to four times the amounts allocated to investment, and three times that for operations costs in the general budget of the Ministry of Education.

Based on the figures of the first part of the general budget, and the number of students enrolled in the academic year 1995, the cost per student in public schools amounts to US\$ 850, or six times the value of grant per student in subsidized education. This is striking as achievement levels are similar in public and subsidized schools.

The ordinary budget is not the sole domain that reflects the government policy in education. There are also the plans and programmes launched outside the budget. The most important being the programme relating to the plan to revive the sector of education included in Horizon 2000 for Development and Reconstruction. This programme amounts to US\$ 965 million (1992 prices) or 13.1 percent of total allocations.

This programme concentrates on public education and the development of its infrastructure, implying a policy that aims to improve the absorptive capacity of the public education sector. Of the eight projects included in the plan, only one (US\$ 10 million) is concerned with improving the quality of education; the remaining seven projects deal with construction and equipment. In principle, then, the plan compensates for the shortfalls in the investment chapter of the ordinary budget, since it earmarks substantial sums for building and regrouping public schools.

Other aspects of education (teachers, curricula, books, etc.) are provided for in the plan to revive education in the public sector, which is the responsibility of the Center for Education Research and Development. The plan, which was approved by the Council of Ministers on 17 August 1994, comprises a nine-year expenditures programme for the Center covering education reform, including the following components: school administration, curricula, books, teaching techniques, training of instructors, school buildings, specialized education, youth and sports activities, educational services, and information and guidance related to education.

The introduction of a new programme structure at the beginning of 1996 was the first important step in the implementation of the *Education Recovery Plan*. The plan aims to achieve universal elementary education and provide for mandatory education of children aged between six and twelve years; for automatic promotion from the first three elementary grades. The plan also sets new objectives that stress skills and civic values, and provides for the teaching of a second foreign language,

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artistic and sports activities, and computer training. Of special significance are the innovations aimed at acquainting students in the general education phase with vocational possibilities, and the introduction of "split-vocational training"; Moreover, the new structure has made it possible to introduce new curricula.

At another level, a plan proposal has been formulated with a view to improving the quality of vocational education and training. As indicated above (section C), the plan aims at a comprehensive development of the sector, including an ambitious building, equipment and supplies programme, along with finance for curricula, studies, training, books and information.

There is yet no integrated plan for the Lebanese University. However, there is an ongoing project to build a university campus at Hadath (near Beirut) at a total cost of US\$ 150 million - as part of the Horizon 2000 for Reconstruction and Development. Part of this project has already been executed, including the Faculty of Sciences and the library building which were inaugurated at the end of 1995. There is also a joint project between the United Nations (UNDP/UNESCO), the World Bank and the Ministry of Higher Education, initiated in 1996 and which aims at developing the institutional capabilities of the Ministry. The project is also to provide support for the rehabilitation of the Lebanese University, modernization of its administrative structures and statistical and financial apparatus, and for strengthening research activities.

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, a number of observations are nevertheless in order. *First*, the existence of three ministries dealing with education: Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Culture and Higher Education; and Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training. This highlights the need for closer coordination in planning, programming and execution. *Second*, no plans have yet been formulated in detail and adopted to develop higher education, technical education and vocational training to be able to assess the prospects for improvement. *Third*, the implementation of existing plans will require dealing with the following problems:

- Providing additional financial resources, or at least securing amounts already earmarked especially in connection with buildings, such as the project of school regrouping - or proposing an appropriate alternative - with the demographic studies needed in connection with the project.
- Re-examining the education administrative structures; these date back to the 1960s and have hardly been altered despite the fundamental changes that have taken place since then in administrative and organizational principals, and techniques in the field. There is also need to rehabilitate the entire cadre (school directors and principles, instructors, trainers). The quality of plan and programme implementation will therefore depend on raising the standard of the administration, and the timing and success of administrative reform.
- Clarifying the technical prerequisites for changing the curricula and producing school books, and ensuring that these are up to the standard to meet the goals and objectives laid down.
- Clarifying the requirements for opening up communication and cooperation channels between the various institutions of learning.

In conclusion, the crucial importance of placing education at the top of the agenda is emphasized - for people are Lebanon's principal resource. Therefore, human resources development takes a degree of even higher importance. The implementation of the basic plans and provisions must be accelerated, be it with respect to primary education, or technical education and vocational training, or higher education. Access to quality education and high standards of educational

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achievement must be prime concerns, at the top of the national policy agenda. Education and human resources development are at the heart of successful sustainable human development, particularly in Lebanon.

**DON'T STOP HERE .. THERE IS MORE TO READ IN CHAPTER THREE  
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HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**